

2018 STUDENT WRITING CONTEST

Western Region Essay Winner

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When most people look at me, they see a regular girl who makes good grades, takes challenging classes, and has plenty of friends. Although this may be true, there's a sad side of me that usually stays quite hidden.

In my 15 years of life, I have already experienced a great deal of pain and loss. I come from a broken home, and, I know, that's not necessarily a rarity these days. What tore my family apart, however, is my mother's drug use. Even though I've read over and over that addiction is a disease, I can't help but feel that my mother chose drugs over my sister and me.

As a young girl growing up without a relationship with my mom, I often question God's plan in all of this. Despite my sadness, I have yet to let this stop me from pursuing and achieving my goals. I am the honor roll student you see. I am the secretary of my school's Interact Club, a club dedicated to helping others, and I am also a sophomore class officer, elected by my peers. I am also a varsity member of my school's academic team.

Last year, I helped our team reach the state tournament for the first time in 11 years. We also made our first trip to Nationals. In addition to these clubs, duties, and activities, I have also set some big goals for my future. I want to become a physician, dedicating my life to medical missions. Even though my life may not be perfect, and I often feel the absence of my mother, I will never let that define who I am, nor will I let it govern my future.

Just like Mavis Claytor-Ford, who never gave up on her dream of being the first African American to earn a nursing degree from the University of Virginia, I will remain focused, optimistic, and determined. The obstacles I have faced so far have taught me two very important things. They have taught me, first, that I am the only one who can truly decide my future. The second thing I have learned from this is love. I have learned how to both love unconditionally and also how to let the love I have in my life fill me.

Everything I have experienced in my 15 years has made me the young adult standing before you today. I want to share my story and let others know that there is hope in every situation and to never give up.